

Sunday, June 4, 2017

Acts 2:1-21

I Cor.12:3-13

Moving With the Spirit

Pentecost Sunday—a day to rejoice in the Spirit's presence and to move as the Spirit leads us to move. It is a day to celebrate the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit as we discern our own spiritual gifts. Pentecost Sunday is marked as the beginning or birth of the church as they Spirit led people to come together, to pray and praise, to share in Communion but to be a place where they are sure that God is leading.

These 4 young people have come together—they represent 4 different schools in the city from 3 different areas within Windsor and 1 outside of Windsor. They are different because of personality, shyness, levels of maturity, and yes because of what they believe and what they see the role of the church is and can be.

They are beginning to understand the Bible as a story of people from oral tradition to possibilities in the future. They see the church as a greeting/ meeting place and this has connected them together again: 2 of the kids attended kindergarten in Amherstburg- now neither lives in the area, two of them have known each other for a long time, one has come into the church with their family within 2 years and one has come back after a few years! In these last few months they have become friends, had some fun, ate a lot of cupcakes, laughed, asked questions and learned a lot about God, the Bible the church but mostly about themselves as a child of God.

We've had a few laughs-reading through Songs of Solomon and discovering that the love poetry in there would not be very flattering today. We listed the communities where Paul wrote letters and sometimes it is difficult to pronounce or even put the emphasis on the right syllables—Emphasis on Ephesus. And we read parts of Revelation when the new heaven and new earth would come. We also connected the covenants Abraham, Moses and Jacob of the Old Testament with the new covenant in Jesus. And re-connected the tree of life from Genesis to the tree of life in Revelation.

They shared in the Good Friday and Easter services and through the readings realized the depth of the suffering Jesus endured for them. And yet they also know that he rose again—for our sakes and for the gift of eternal life. This has helped them as they have gone through some different experiences in their lives—In their 14-15 years these kids have moved, lived in different houses, lost loved ones in death, acquired many pets, tried different activities and yet still smile today as a child of God. They know also about the power of prayer and that they are never alone.

They have also learned by talking to others about their story of faith. It was important to those people who spoke with the kids about how important it is in order to be grounded and have a focus in this world. And this grounding comes from God and his faithful followers as we experience the church. They shared about their classroom being multi-faith, multi Christian denominations, multicultural and of many faiths, those without any faith or faithful home as well as what it means to be faithful to God in our United Church tradition. Social justice and helping others is very important to these young people but not just in a band aid way but in a way of finding resolutions to problems.

I've seen these four young people grow up—not only in the last 8 years, but especially in these last 6 months. They love their church family and this place. They want to share their gifts—they want to paint, create art, share music, help with maintenance tasks and take on significant roles as this place is their home away from home; a place of stability and where everyone loves them and is loved by them. This is their family in faith whom they love.

The Spirit is in this place—and as the Spirit offers to these young people their gifts and ultimately their ministries in these days we as a congregation need not give permission but encouragement to implement their dreams and visions and let them take ownership of this place—as it is 'my church' and I love the people.

The Spirit of God is in this place—it is time to share and rejoice that God's Spirit has moved into the hearts of these young people. And they are ready to go where the Spirit leads; we just need to follow and rejoice with them. God is truly doing something new and exciting here at Glenwood. Let's rejoice and glad!

I share with you these statements in Celebration for Confirmation by John W. Howell:

The journey of faith is a journey through life.

We are pilgrims, travelers, making our way.

We sojourn on the pathway of the saints.

We walk the same highway and follow the same landmarks which lead them.

But for each generation, in each place and time, and for each seeker who travels this way the road seems different.

Today we celebrate tomorrow's leaders, the heroes of a history yet to be made.

We hold out our hands to them and beckon them to join us on the journey.

As they walk beside us, we may tell them our stories, but we may not tell them the way.

It is a quest they must follow by themselves.

We can tell them of our questions, but the answers must come from within their own hearts.

We celebrate a new generation of faith, a new branch, with its leaves about to blossom.

Let us all make a place for them and let them know that the family of Christ is their family too, as we all worship God together.